

## **THE THREATS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHANGING CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS. CEECOM CONFERENCE, BRNO, CZECHIA, JUNE 29–30, 2023**

The Department of Media Studies and Journalism—at Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia – in cooperation with the ECREA Central and East European Network organized CEECOM's, 14th Central and Eastern European Communication and Media Conference at Brno, Czech Republic on June 29–30, 2023. The theme of the conference was “Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Changing Central and Eastern European Media Environments.”

The conference organizers announced the main field of discussion as: “The rise of illiberal tendencies, populist and radical political actors and populists and radical communication is associated with increased political hostility towards knowledge-producing elite institutions. In populist discourses, established professional media are typically labeled as ‘fake news’ or ‘a part of liberal propaganda’, and professional journalists as enemies of the public. Moreover, during the last two years the countries in the region were hugely affected by two crises – COVID-19 and the Russo-Ukrainian War taking place in the region.”

The conference touched those particularly important issues, but not only for the region. This was particularly evident in the selection of Professor Katalin Feher as the keynote speaker. She is an associate professor at the University of Public Service, Budapest (HU), a recent Fulbright Research Scholar at Drexel University, Philadelphia (US), a Bolyai Postdoc at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and UNKP Bolyai+ Scholar of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology (HU), a visiting professor at the Masaryk University, Brno (CZ), a member of the University of Southern California MASTS and also of the editorial board of the journal KOME. Feher is a founder and PI of AI Media Research. Her presentation about the influence of AI on journalism and communication concentrated on the symbiosis of convergence, mediatization, and AI.

The discussion in the individual panels continued various AI and digital journalism-related problems from many perspectives. The panels entitled: Digital and Specialized Journalism; Social Media Communication; and Going Digital specified the most important challenges not only for CEE region but for modern journalism in general.

Photo 1. Participants of the CEECOM Conference



Photo by: Agnieszka Węglińska, University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław, Poland

The other crucial topic of the conference was the war in Ukraine. Attending researchers presented studies of social media, traditional media, public opinion, and journalists regarding the conflict in Ukraine. Other topics included an interesting and substantial corpus of research about media freedom in CEECOM countries such as Hungary, Poland, Kosovo, Albania, etc., as well as populism, polarization, radicalizing public opinion, and fake news.

Photo 2. Participants of the CEECOM Conference



Photo by: Agnieszka Węglińska, University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław, Poland

## EVENT

An emotional moment during the conference was the acknowledgment of Professor Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska's contribution to the development of media research in CEE. The conference attracted academics from many European countries, including: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Albania, Slovenia, Kosovo, Georgia, Sweden, Bulgaria, etc.

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